

**STATEMENT OF  
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OF THE  
DISABLED AMERICAN VETERANS  
BEFORE THE  
COMMITTEE ON VETERANS' AFFAIRS  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON BENEFITS  
UNITED STATES HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES  
JUNE 7, 2001**

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Subcommittee:

I am pleased to submit the views of the Disabled American Veterans (DAV) regarding H.R. 1291, the 21st Century Montgomery GI Bill Enhancement Act. As an organization devoted to the welfare of disabled veterans and their families, we embrace the opportunity to support measures that would enhance the lives of those who served our Nation.

The DAV supports H.R. 1291 because it restores the Montgomery GI Bill (MGIB) to its former status as a meaningful readjustment benefit for discharged servicemembers. In its current form, the MGIB is inadequate because it has not kept pace with the significant increases in the costs of higher education. While the cost to attend a four-year public college has escalated to at least \$ 1,025 a month, the MGIB pays only \$650 per month. As a result, fewer than 55 percent of MGIB recipients are able to afford college.

Such economic ramifications extend well beyond the disservice imposed upon individual veterans. Labor Department statistics indicate that the government profited on the investment cost of the World War II GI Bill, which enabled higher income earnings and a greater amount of money collected through taxes. Certainly, the economy of the entire nation benefited immeasurably as a result of the thousands who utilized the GI Bill. The Nation's economic potential will certainly be damaged if only half of eligible veterans can afford to pursue higher education in the future.

Increasing MGIB benefits will increase usage. If enacted, H.R. 1291 will provide for an increase in the total dollar value of the MGIB from its current level of \$23,400 to \$39,600 by 2004. This increase will cover approximately ninety percent of education and living expenses at the average 4-year school.

DAV urges Congress to pass the much-needed 21st Century Montgomery GI Bill Enhancement Act, H.R. 1291. Enactment of H.R. 1291 will restore the intent of the original GI Bill to pay the full tuition and fees of higher education.

In addition to enhancing MGIB, it is important to note that higher education costs have also outpaced benefits for training and rehabilitation under Chapter 31 of title 38, United States Code. Chapter 31 should also be enhanced to better assist disabled veterans through their transition from military to civilian life.

On behalf of the more than one million members of the DAV, we thank you for the opportunity to present our views, and we thank the Subcommittee for its continuing support of our nation's veterans.